



OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING SCENARIO IN WEST BENGAL: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is a system, where teachers and learners need not necessarily be present either at same place or same time. With the advancement of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) boundaries of classroom is becoming blurred and the ODL is become a popular medium of education. Open and Distance educational institutes offer all kinds of programmes ranging from vocational to general to professional to technical. This paper indented to find out the scenario of open and distance learning in West Bengal. A methodological study finds out different aspects of ODL in West Bengal.

KEY WORDS: Open and Distance Education, Open and Distance Learning, West Bengal, UGC-DEB.

INTRODUCTION

The Open Learning and Distance Education focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Two terms that are being used almost inter-changeably are 'Open Learning' and 'Distance Education' and they are often combined to be known as Open and Distance Learning (ODL). ODL is a term which accepts the philosophy of "openness" and uses the "distance mode" of learning. ODL is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education, and its potential impact on education systems has been greatly noticeable through the development of internet-based information communication technologies, particular the World Wide Web.

ODL is a system, where teachers and learners need not necessarily be present either at same place or same time. It is flexible in regard to a particular method or procedure and timing of teaching and learning as also the admission criteria without compromising necessary quality considerations. ODL is becoming more and more significant for continuing education, skill updating of in service personnel, lifelong learning and for quality education of relevance to learners located at educationally disadvantageous locations. ODL occupies a special place in the Indian higher education system because of its major contribution in enhancing the gross enrolment ratio and democratization of higher education to large segments of the Indian population particularly to reach out to the unreached and to meet the demands of lifelong learning which has become more of a necessity in the knowledge society.

The objectives of distance education are (a) students who had to discontinue their formal education owing to pecuniary and other circumstances; (b) students in geographically remote areas; (c) students who had to discontinue education because of lack of aptitude and motivation but who may later on become motivated; (d) students who cannot find a seat or do not wish to join a regular college or university department although they have the necessary qualifications to pursue higher education; and (e) individuals who look upon education as a life-time activity and may either like to refresh their knowledge in an existing discipline or to acquire knowledge in a new area.

The growth of distance education has been exponential over the last four decades in India. With the establishment of Andhra Pradesh Open University (Later renamed as Dr BR Ambedkar Open University), Hyderabad in 1982, a new chapter in the distance education system began when full-fledged Open University with the mandate to provide distance education was established. This was followed by the establishment of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in 1985. The idea of having institutions imparting open distance learning was accepted by many states and 1987 saw the emergence of two more Open Universities, namely, Nalanda Open University (NOU) Patna, Bihar and Vardhman Mahaveer Open University (VMOU), Kota, Rajasthan. Subsequently, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU), Nashik, Maharashtra was established in 1989. Distance mode programmes in dual mode universities started with the University of Delhi, which started offering programmes as correspondence courses in B.A. degree were introduced in 1962 by the School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education. In 1968, the Punjab University, Patiala and the University of Rajasthan launched correspondence courses by opening Institute of Correspondence and Continuing Education. In this way the ODL education system started in India from a single institution (University of Delhi) in 1962 to the number of central, state, deemed to be and private universities along with many stand-alone ODL institutions in present day. The ODL sys-

tem in India has emerged as an important mode for providing education to diverse sections of society. The impressive number of ODL institutions in the country bear testimony to the fact.

The ODL institutes offer all kinds of programmes ranging from vocational to general to professional to technical. To control the quality issue, University Grants Commission-Distance Education Bureau (UGC-DEB) always judge and monitor the different issues relating to ODL. UGC-DEB regulates the programmes and affiliation of ODL universities and institutions in India.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study attempt to find out the scenario of ODL education in West Bengal with respect to some parameters. The problem may be stated as "SCENARIO OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN WEST BENGAL."

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the number and status of ODL institutes.
- To find out the different programme of study.
- To find out the subject area of study.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is restricting to ODL education in state of West Bengal only within the period of academic year 2016-17 and onward. Information is collected from the UGC-DEB website F.No.12-13/2016 (DEB-III) dated 16.09.2016.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a documentary study and based on official documents. The data were collected from the selected educational statistics, MHRD, Government of India, and UGC-DEB. The information available in web pages is considered for the analysis purpose.

Subject heading has been identified and controlled by the second summary of knowledge organisation scheme Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) 22 ed.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

In West Bengal there are 9 private universities, 1 central university, 1 deemed university and 25 state universities and 1 state open university total 37 available for higher studies, out of them only 6 universities have the ODL recognition for the academic year 2016-2017 and onwards. These universities are listed in the **table-1**.

Table – 1: List of ODL Universities in West Bengal

Sl No.	Name of the Institute	Status of the Institute	Period of Recognition	Official Web Page
01	Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU)	State Open University	2016-2017 to 2017-2018	http://www.wbnsou.ac.in/
02	Rabindra Bharati University (RBU)	State University	Do	http://www.rbudde.in/

03	University of Burdwan (UoB)	State University	Do	http://dde.buruniv.ac.in/
04	University of Kalyani (UoK)	State University	Do	http://www.dodl.klyuniv.ac.in/
05	University of North Bengal (UoNB)	State University	Do	http://www.ddenbu.in/
06	Vidyasagar University (VU)	State University	Do	http://dde.vidyasagar.ac.in/

ODL i.e. NSOU. In NSOU 56 programmes are approved by the UGC. The programmes are under the 5 broad categories; Mater Degree (MD), Bachelor Degree (BD), Post Graduate Diploma (PGD), Diploma and Advanced Diploma (D&AD), Certificate & Advanced Certificates (C&AC). 13 different MD programmes, 16 different BD programmes, 16 different PGD programmes, 5 different D&AD Programmes, 6 different C&AC programmes names are studies in NSOU. In RBU 12(11 MD+1D&AD) programmes, UoB 10(10MD) programmes, UoK 05(5MD) programmes, UoNB 07(7MD) programmes, and in VU 13(13MD) programmes name are approved by the UGC.

Following table-2 shows the overall structure of study of subjects in ODL institutes of West Bengal.

The above six universities are state university and one of them especially for

Table- 2: List of subject studies in ODL institutes of West Bengal

Sl. No.	Name of Institute	Broad Subject Domain	Specific Subject Domain	Programme Name	Number of Programme
1	NSOU	Computer science, knowledge & systems	DTP & Networking	D&AD	1
2	NSOU	Library and Information Science	Library and Information Science	BD	1
				MD	1
3	NSOU	News media, journalism & publishing	Journalism and Mass Communication	PGD	1
4	NSOU	Psychology	Psychological Counselling	PGD	1
5	NSOU	Ethics	Ethics Leadership	PGD	1
6	NSOU	Social sciences, sociology & anthropology	Sociology	BD	1
			Women Empowerment	C&AC	1
7	NSOU	Political Science	Political Science	BD	1
				MD	1
8	NSOU	Economics	Economics	BD	1
9	NSOU	Law	Taxation	PGD	1
			Human Rights	C&AC	1
10	NSOU	Public Administration & Military Science	Public Administration	BD	1
11	NSOU	Social Problem & Services	Social Work	MD	1
12	NSOU	Education	Education	MD	1
			Special Education	BD	1
			Pre-Primary Teacher Education	D&AD	1
13	NSOU	Commerce	Commerce	BD	1
				MD	1
14	NSOU	English Language	English	BD	1
				MD	1
			English Teaching	PGD	1
				MD	1
			English Communication	C&AC	1
15	NSOU	Other Languages	Bengali	BD	1
				MD	1
16	NSOU	Mathematics	Mathematics	BD	1
				MD	1
17	NSOU	Physics	Physics	BD	1
18	NSOU	Chemistry	Chemistry	BD	1
19	NSOU	Botany	Botany	BD	1
20	NSOU	Zoology	Zoology	BD	1
				MD	1
21	NSOU	Agriculture	Agriculture and Horticulture	C&AC	1
22	NSOU	Home & Family Management	Needle Work Knitting	PGD	1
			Tailoring & Dress Designing	C&CD	2
			Tailoring & Dress Designing	D&AD	1
23	NSOU	Management & Public Relations	Export Import	PGD	1
			Hospital Front Office	PGD	1
			Modern Office	PGD	1
			Retail	PGD	1
			Disaster Risk	PGD	1
			E Accounting and Financial	PGD	1
			Safety Skill Security	PGD	1
			Entrepreneurship development & Small Business	PGD	1
			Public relation and advertisement	PGD	1

24	NSOU	Graphic Arts & Decorative Arts	Apparel Designing and fashion Technology	PGD	1
25	NSOU	Sports, Games & Entertainment	Sports and Competitive Yoga	PGD	1
26	NSOU	History	History	BD	1
				MD	1
27	NSOU	Geography & Travel	Geography	BD	1
				MD	1
			Travel & Tourism	PGD	1
28	RBU	Social Sciences, Sociology & Anthropology	Environment Study	MD	1
29	RBU	Political Science	Political Science	MD	1
30	RBU	Social Problem & Services	Social Work	MD	1
31	RBU	Education	Education	MD	1
32	RBU	English Language	English	MD	1
33	RBU	Other Languages	Bengali	MD	1
			Sanskrit	MD	1
34	RBU	Sports, Games & Entertainment	Rabindra Sangeet	MD	1
			Vocal Music	MD	1
35	RBU	Other Literature	Tagore Literature	D&AD	1
36	RBU	History	History	MD	1
37	RBU	Geography & travel	Geography	MD	1
38	UoB	Computer science, knowledge & systems	Comupter Science	MD	1
39	UoB	Philosophy	Philosophy	MD	1
40	UoB	Political Science	Political Science	MD	1
41	UoB	Commerce	Commerce	MD	1
			Business Administration	MD	1
42	UoB	English Language	English	MD	1
43	UoB	Other Languages	Bengali	MD	1
			Sanskrit	MD	1
44	UoB	Mathematics	Mathematics	MD	1
45	UoB	History	History	MD	1
46	Uok	Public Administration & Military science	Public administration	MD	1
47	Uok	Education	Education	MD	1
48	UoK	English Language	English	MD	1
49	UoK	Other Languages	Bengali	MD	1
50	UoK	History	History	MD	1
51	UoNB	Philosophy	Philosophy	MD	1
52	UoNB	Political Science	Political Science	MD	1
53	UoNB	English Language	English	MD	1
54	UoNB	Others Languages	Bengali	MD	1
			Nepali	MD	1
55	UoNB	Mathematics	Mathematics	MD	1
56	UoNB	History	History	MD	1
57	VU	Political Science	Political Science	MD	1
58	VU	Public administration & military science	Environment Science	MD	1
59	VU	Commerce	Farm Management	MD	1
60	VU	English Language	English	MD	1
61	VU	Other Languages	Bengali	MD	1
			Sanskrit	MD	1
62	VU	Mathematics	Applied Mathematics	MD	1
63	VU	Physics	Physics	MD	1
64	VU	Chemistry	Chemistry	MD	1
65	VU	Botany	Botany	MD	1
66	VU	Zoology	Zoology	MD	1
67	VU	History	History	MD	1
66	VU	Geography & travel	Geography	MD	1

Maximum number of subject are available in the NSOU. Bachelor degree programmes and PGD programmes in ODL mode are available only in the NSOU. Significant number of management related courses are available in NSOU. All other state universities in West Bengal mainly conduct master degree programmes in ODL mode and subjects are conventional.

CONCLUSION

The last six decades ODL system has registered a phenomenal growth in the context of expansion and diversification of higher education. At present in West Bengal there are 37 universities available for higher studies. To meet the thirst of ever increasing need of students, six universities are conducting ODL mode of education. Five different programmes are conducting in the ODL institutes, i.e. Master Degree, Bachelor Degrees, Post Graduate Diploma, Certificate & Advanced Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma. M. Phil. and PhD Programmes are not currently available in the ODL institutes of West Bengal. UGC-DEB time to time changes rules and regulations for open and distance programme to maintain the standard. The study shows the overall ODL scenario in West Bengal.

This study will help the students to identify the programmes as well as subjects where they want to study. Educator and the policy makers can make a plan for the future area of study in the ODL mode. Database designer can able to make search database based on the subject's headings, which may be useful for students to find out their field of interest and ODL institutes.

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